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LEBANON: Crisis With Fedayeen Continues



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Lebanon: As the political search for a way out of the present crisis continues, insurgent forces have occupied a few small towns.

Fedayeen and their supporters retain control of parts of Tripoli, where there was sporadic shooting through Saturday with some 15 killed. Sporadic shooting also continues in other parts of Lebanon and the insurgents hold a few small towns in eastern and southern Lebanon. Some Syrian forces are reported to have been involved in the actions along the eastern Lebanese border. Beirut has remained relatively quiet, but tensions are high with numerous roadblocks manned by armed civilians.

Army morale is apparently good in the face of the present crisis.



Reports of Syrian support for the insurrectionists probably also served to unify the Lebanese Army in supporting the government's policies against the fedayeen. [The army, however, is small and might find it difficult to handle effectively both widespread civil disturbances and serious clashes with fedayeen groups at the same time.]

Efforts at mediating the crisis are continuing. President Hilu is meeting with officials of various Arab states, and President Nasir has sent a representative to call on those states most closely involved. Hilu will have to bow to some fedayeen demands, but undoubtedly hopes to avoid complete capitulation.

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The unofficial "warning" carried by TASS on Saturday has been accompanied by Soviet press and radio suggestions that the US is looking for a chance to intervene. Pravda, with a touch of what

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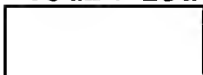
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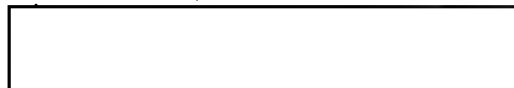
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may be genuine concern, has tried to link the current NATO maneuvers in the Mediterranean with this thesis. The Soviets have also taken note of Israeli Deputy Premier Allon's statement last week that his country could not ignore the events in Lebanon, which Moscow calls a direct threat of intervention. Most of these Soviet statements, however, also serve to convey the message to the Arabs that their interests would be best served if they settled Lebanon's troubles among themselves without further violence. The Soviets probably believe that they stand to gain little other than propaganda advantage out of the present situation, which they may fear could lead to a larger conflict.

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(Map)



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Communist China - Vietnam: Peking may be moving to soften its position on the Paris talks and to restore closer relations with Hanoi.

The thrust of China's new approach was suggested in Chou En-lai's speech at a banquet on 23 October for visiting North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong. Chou limited his comments on the outcome of the war to an expression of belief that the Vietnamese would overcome "all difficulties" along their "road of advance"--a vague formulation that could sanction a wide range of North Vietnamese political and military options. Chou on this occasion also omitted the standard Chinese call for Hanoi to persevere in protracted struggle until final victory is won, although this phrase was preserved in a Chinese communiqué on talks between Chou and Dong issued the next day.

Other indications of Chinese flexibility surfaced earlier this month during the extended stay in Peking of a high-ranking National Liberation Front - Provisional Revolutionary Government (NLF-PRG) delegation. By rebroadcasting in their entirety statements by the Vietnamese delegates, Peking for the first time acknowledged the existence of the NLF-PRG ten-point peace plan. A reference to this plan was also embedded in the communiqué of 24 October. This is in marked contrast to the earlier Chinese propaganda policy of editing out all unpalatable portions of Vietnamese Communist statements mentioning the Paris talks and a possible settlement of the war.

This shift in approach appears to represent an attempt by China to relieve its isolation and improve its position among Asian Communist states. Peking's frosty treatment of Hanoi after the start of the Paris talks in mid-1968 severely strained Sino-Vietnamese relations and left China alone in its implacable and heavy-handed opposition to a

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negotiated settlement. By moving away from this unproductive line, the Chinese in effect appear to be assuming a new role as champion of Hanoi's maximum demands at Paris, a position that promises them greater opportunity to influence North Vietnamese policy and to participate in an eventual settlement of the war, should they decide to do so.

At the same time, the Chinese may be using their ideological justification for the current Sino-Soviet border talks as a means of rationalizing their more accommodating line on Vietnam. A recent Chinese broadcast stated that Peking's "dual revolutionary tactics" of negotiating while resisting Soviet aggression can be applied "by all revolutionary people"--a suggestion that China finally may be ready to endorse Hanoi's fight-and-talk strategy.

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NOTES

Kenya: President Jomo Kenyatta's goodwill trip aimed at easing tribal tensions in western Kenya has backfired. Luo tribesmen, who constitute the largest tribal group in the area, hurled stones at the President after he had denounced Oginga Odinga, the leader of the Luo-dominated opposition party. President Kenyatta's tough security troops retaliated by opening fire, and killed several Luo. Kenya Government officials believe that the situation is under control; [REDACTED]

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Kenyatta yesterday ordered the arrest of all opposition party activists as a result of the incident. It is doubtful that this move will calm the situation and, indeed, it may provoke even more serious trouble. [REDACTED]

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Netherlands Antilles: Efforts to form a new government remain stalled. Former finance minister Petronia was asked by the governor to form a coalition government when no party received a majority in the September parliamentary elections. The Democratic Party, which won the largest block of seats, would not accept Petronia's proposal to give important cabinet posts to minor parties as their price for joining the coalition. All parties seem anxious to avoid new elections, however, and negotiations will probably continue for some time. [REDACTED]

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